

**Historic District Commission
Town Hall, Room 126
Final Meeting Minutes, July 10, 2014**

Meeting called to order at 7:30 PM. Attending Kathy Acerbo-Bachmann (KAB), David Honn (DH), Pamela Lynn (PL), Ron Regan (RR), Anita Rogers (AR), and David Shoemaker (DS).

David Foley of 643 Pheasant Hill attended as a prospective member.

Absent: Mike Gowing as BofS rep.

7:30 PM Citizens' Questions

Renee Robbins of 53 Windsor Ave. had questions about the fence installed near the MBTA construction area adjacent to New London Piazza and about trees to be replaced in front of the Acton Pharmacy.

KAB remembered that replacement of the trees was a condition of the COA and that the applicants have met with Dean Charter as suggested.

KAB reminded the HDC that Cory York was going to check on the MBTA issue.

7:31 PM Approval Minutes for 5/29/14, 6/10/14, and 6/19/14.

Unanimous consent to approve minutes for 6/10/14 and 6/19/14 and to hold the minutes of 5/29/14.

7:36 PM 29 Windsor Avenue – Questions from Prospective Homeowner

Ron Regan recused himself as a direct abutter.

Judi Kotanchik brought a plot plan and a septic system diagram. In considering purchasing the property she would like to move the garage forward in order to have a first floor bedroom. The existing steps would preclude visits from handicapped friends.

KAB reiterated the HDC approach to such a request including the need for a public hearing for a definitive decision. This discussion was informal and non-binding.

AR notes that Windsor Ave is a street of detached garages. It would be possible to have a “tenuous” look with a solution like a breezeway.

PL asked about whether there might be a concern about the elevation on the left side of the property, specifically about a potential foundation. AR mentioned the related issue of roof lines.

KAB suggested the value of hiring an architect to provide several different solutions. She would lean toward AR’s earlier comment about a solution with a breezeway that turns the garage so the doors do not show but rather the side of the structure.

DH reiterated the key issue would be the garage doors. Attached garages started in the 1940s not during the period of this historic house. DS asked whether DH thought turning the garage would be compatible with the street. DH agreed. AR and DH indicated there must be a step between a new garage and the first floor to which it might be attached.

AR suggested there needs to be an accurate plot plan and the surveyor should render the topography accurately.

8:00 PM 525 Massachusetts Ave. – New Post at Pedestrian Crosswalk

This issue was taken early. AR explained the concern of the applicant about pedestrian safety especially that of children. AR felt that the warning light was acceptable but that the solar panel was objectionable.

RR did not feel strongly about the Victorian pole but did not support the solar arrangement as shown in the application materials.

KAB would like to see one installed and senses that no one is supportive of the solar arrangement. She would like to have access to definitive data that this is the safest approach for the location .

DF was able to provide a photo in situ on his phone.

8:15 PM 603 Massachusetts Ave. - Application 1420: Fence

As requested MM checked the lot line in the front of the property and found it is very close to the front of the house. As a result he proposed a new location for the fence, on the right side of the house starting at the back of the porch and on the left side of the house starting from the front corner of the kitchen, basically creating a straight line with fence connecting with the house on either side.

KAB alerted the applicant that HDC would be concerned with both the location of the fence and the materials to be used.

AR liked the new configuration much better. She does not have trouble with changing material but has trouble seeing how they would be joined in the same plane. She also did not feel that the fencing must come off the house in a straight line. MM indicated that there is a stone wall that might become a connector for the two different fencing materials.

AR felt the specimen was sufficiently traditional

PL believed this plan made much more sense.

KAB indicated this plan was a much better solution but would like more specifics about the fencing materials.

DH asked about the elevation which has changed a bit after the installation of a new septic system. DH suggested the value of having a clear plan of how the fence will drop in specific segments. DH reiterated the need to stake it out. AR indicated that the fence must be horizontal from post to post.

RR liked this plan better particularly the style of fence.

DS was good with the plan.

RR moved to approve Application 1420 a picket and split rail fence around the yard at 603 Massachusetts Avenue. The picket fence approved is a 4' high Hamilton style fence with flat post caps, flat-top pickets and

dado cap (see photos attached to application). The picket fence shall start on the right side of the house from the street at the back of the porch such that the stairs descend to the yard inside the fence. The fence will continue across the yard parallel to the street to the east property line and then along the east property line to the north-east corner of the yard. At the corner the fence style will transition to a split post fence across the north property line to roughly around the east-west midpoint of the yard, then running north-south through the yard, turning to run parallel to the street on the south property line to the stone wall at which point the picket fence will run from there to the southwest corner of the kitchen. The split rail fence may have a plastic mesh attached to keep children or pets from passing through the fence. The fence described above is configured as as described in the plot plan supplied and signed by the applicant dated 6/10/14. From post to post plum, horizontally aligned and stepped across changes in grade. It is recommended that the fence be painted white.

KAB reminded the HDC that the vote would be pending abutter notification.

Accepted unanimously but must assure that abutters have been notified.

8:31 PM 540 Massachusetts Ave. – Application 1422: New Construction

As an abutter RR recused himself from the discussion and left the building.

Bruce Ringwall and John and Edward Flannery joined the discussion at 8:48 pm.

Using the submitted plans DH explained his concern about the façade being primarily garage doors.

Bruce Ringwall asked if as DH and AR had walked the street, whether they still believed this process was necessary. If so, when can the hearing be scheduled? KAB explained the window for the public hearing. BR asked for clarification about how the hearing process would be scheduled. As a consideration BR cannot attend meetings scheduled August 2-9.

BR explained that the three went back to the site and added changes proposed during the previous meeting including dormers, cedar c clapboards and wood windows. As the structures will be three hundred yards back from the public way and on an angle they would prefer to use aluminum windows as they will be difficult to see. They also added wood trim on the sides, asphalt shingles, and softened the details.

KAB asked whether they have made contact with abutters to foresee what might be their concerns. KAB clarified that what will be voted on is what can be seen from the public way. However, during a public hearing it is normal also to listen to general concerns of the abutters.

KAB explained that HDC usually starts a discussion by going around the members sharing their reactions.

DH began explaining that he and AR walked the public way and felt that it is a lot of building for the lot. They thought the trees are an asset and should be saved to add to the value of the properties. DH expressed concern about the placement of the garage doors on the front of the building which does not occur in this district. DH referred to the strategy used by the applicants on River St. with a central driveway between two houses with the garage doors turned and almost entirely out of view. DH thinks that it would enhance the value of the properties to be greeted by a porch rather than garage doors. A simpler solution would be to push the pedestrian entries forward minimizing the impact of the garage doors.

BR explained the internal constraints against trying DH's suggestion. If so, then at the least the entrances could be enhanced and be made more welcoming. The applicants have been discussing the issue of the pavement in the front of each building and have not yet decided how many spaces will be in the front of each building.

DS asked about the suitability of the River Street solution. BR indicated that one issue is that the elevation drops off in the back of the lot restricting the options. Issues with the existing pool house have required that the buildings be moved back. DH notes that tandem parking would not be a good solution.

AR wondered about the placement of both buildings which seems random and not aligned with the existing building. BR's thoughts have focused on maximizing the backyards and porches. AR and BR thought together about elevation changes in the back. AR asked about whether a detached garage might be a better solution. BR was concerned about cost whereas AR suggested that a detached arrangement might be cheaper. KAB focused on the potential increase in living space. BR alerted that the public way cannot be built on.

BR introduced a second version. DH responded more positively to the garage doors which would be steel with graining. He would delete the small pediments and use the resources for upgrading other elements. Soffits are too small. By increasing the soffit it would minimize the impact of the garage doors. Elements that look like they are holding up the structure above would also help to minimize the garage doors. By extending the roof out a little more, there would be added protection for the clapboards below. DH suggested that there be additional windows across the shed dormer perhaps triples rather than doubles . The intent would be to provide more rhythm. A small window next to each front door would provide vision of who has come to the door.

KAB asked about two over one windows . DH was okay with this. KAB asked about windows on the front of WAVE, were they wood or not? KAB asked DH's view of wood windows in this case. DH will think about a window at this distance from the public way and at an oblique angle. AR would like to see a cellular unit with an integral sill and internal material. It all weathers similarly as a unit versus aluminum with wood as the applicants have requested.

DS would wish front yards with grass and understands the good efforts that have been made.

KAB agrees with DS's suggestion and would consider the type of window described by AR. If the trees were gone, she wonders how much of the structures would be visible. KAB asked whether the first redrawing of the driveway might not be visible. Parking for the second structure is much more problematic. The group continued to think about how to move the second building slightly to improve the parking situation. The right

away poses a serious limitation. BR has wondered whether two spaces could be created across the public way.

AR would like to see the cut sheets for the garage doors.

BR asked whether HDC would wish to see the dormer come down further on the second building like the suggestions for the first. AR and DH would prefer to see the shed dormer on the second building which will be more visible from the public way. AR and DH would be comfortable with two shed facades as it is a better plan. Then the windows could be varied between the two buildings.

KAB reviewed next steps including scheduling the public hearing, providing cut sheets and more information on parking arrangement.

The applicants can either be scheduled for the July 22 HDC meeting or meet with the liaison.

In answer to AR's question about the garage doors, an example can be seen at 81 River St.

9:55pm KAB moved to adjourn seconded by AR.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela Lynn
Secretary